editor's choice

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 20

English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 20

Story & Art by
Takehiko Inoue
Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
VAGABOND is rated M for Mature.
Contains graphic violence.
Recommended for mature readers.

Vagabond

vol. 20

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#172 Sons

TUGG
HOW BRAVE.
YOU LEAPT FORWARD TO RETRIEVE YOUR SWORD.
...WILLING TO SACRIFICE YOUR ARM.
THAT'S NOT THE COURAGE ...
...OF A RECKLESS BARBARIAN ...

YOU CONCEALED YOUR FEAR, WRAPPED IT AROUND THAT ARM...!!
FWOH
...YOU'RE DIFFERENT NOW...
HMM...
YOU LOOK VERY CONTENT...
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HMM...
HUF
YES...
HUF
YOU HAVE WON.

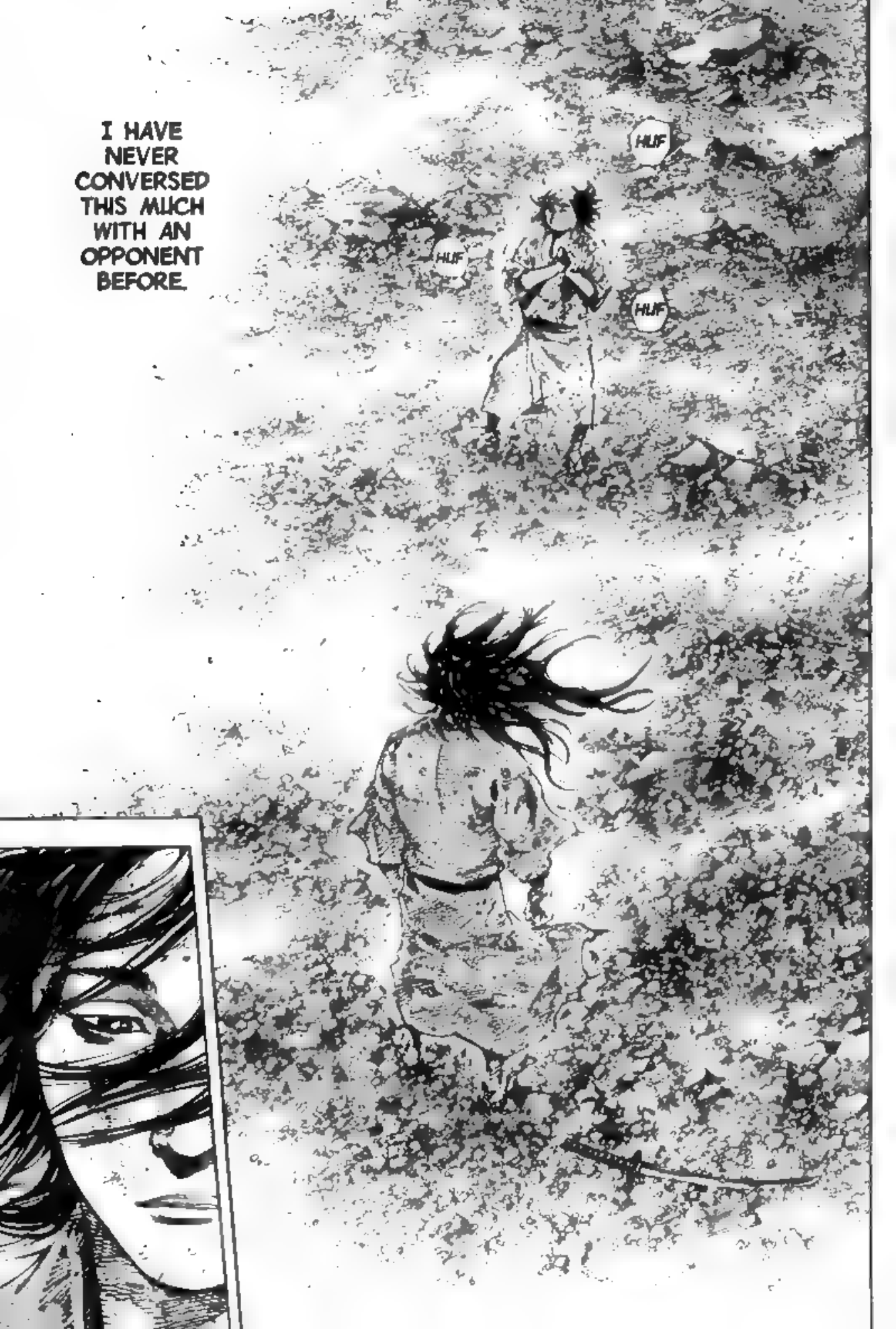
HUF
HUF
YOU...
HUF

FWOM
FICH

I DOUBT YOU ARE OF PEASANT ORIGIN.
HUF
HUF
HUF

...BE DRIVEN TO THE SWORD?
HUF
HUF
WHY WOULD SOMEONE DEAF AND MUTE...

I UNDER-STAND.


I HAVE NEVER CONVERSED THIS MUCH WITH AN OPPONENT BEFORE.
HUF
HUF
HUF

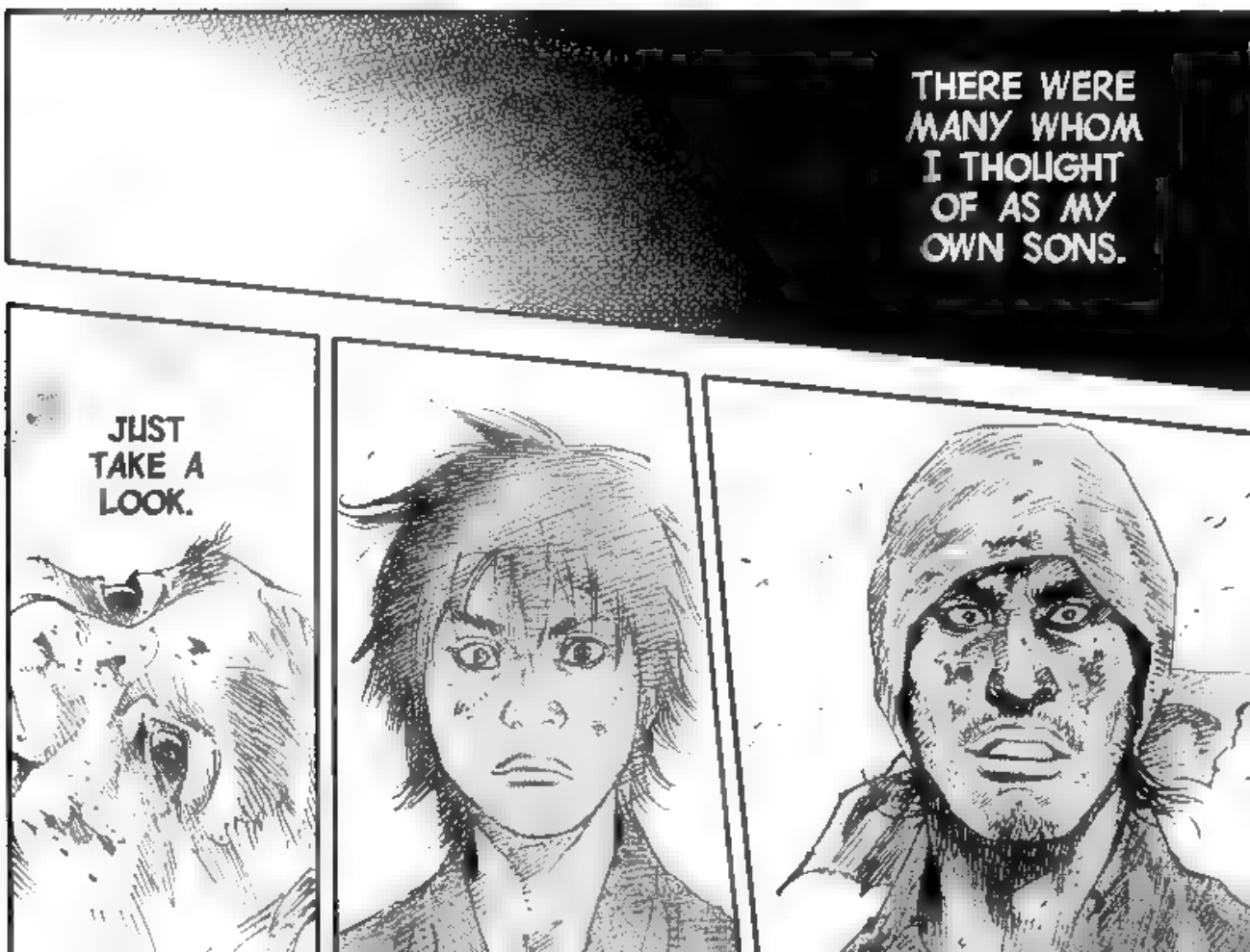
NNGH
FWICH
NNGH
FICH
SMASH

FWSSSH

YOU COULD BE MY SON.
YOU'RE SO YOUNG.
BUT THE FACT IS...
I NEVER GOT MARRIED AND I'M CHILDLESS.
AND...

AHH. WHY DID YOU COME BACK, YOU FOOLS...?

THERE WERE MANY...


THERE WERE MANY WHOM I THOUGHT OF AS MY OWN SONS.
JUST TAKE A LOOK.

THEY
ARE ALL
MY SONS.

DO NOT BE SAD, KOLIN.
AHHH!
IT DOESN'T FEEL SO BAD...

UNGH...
NNGH...
URR...
AH...
THE SWORDS!!
ICHIZŌ...

GRB
FWOOSH
FICH

IF I WERE ASKED WHAT I LIKED MOST ABOUT MYSELF...
...I WOULD SAY IT'S MY NAME— KOUN.

SADAKORE GAVE ME THIS NAME.
YAHH!!

AHH...
FICH
FICH
FICH
!

KLANG

FWP
FWP
KLAK
HUF
HUF
HUF

...I'LL NOT FORGIVE YOU IF YOU'RE WEAK.
YOU BETTER NOT DISAPPOINT ME...
HUF
YOU'VE DEFEATED SADAKORE...
I PRAY YOU'RE THE STRONGEST MAN I'VE YET TO ENCOUNTER.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

Vagabond

(SADAKORE)
1P

#173 The Desire to Fight

FICH
KHLID
FICH
FWOOSH

EVER SINCE I WAS SIX...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HE WAS MY MASTER...
HE WAS LIKE A FATHER TO ME.
HUF
HUF
SNIFF

PLEASE...
AS THE MAN THAT DEFEATED SADAKORE...
MAY YOU BE THE STRONGEST SWORDSMAN I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.
SNIFF...
.....
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO STUNNED ?
THIS IS NOTHING ...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
CUT HIM DOWN, KOLIN.
KILL HIM.

FWOOOSH
DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE ALREADY GIVEN UP!

THP

THUNK
THP

WHUDD
AH...
!!
FICH

!!
TNK
FWP
!!

FICH
KOUN, I'M GOING TO CUT HIM DOWN.
COMING AT ME BAREHANDED.

FICH
?!
HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND.
THE SWORD !!
FICH
FICH

MMF!
GRB
HE'S FAST...
!!

FICH
!
LINGH!
TUGG
?!

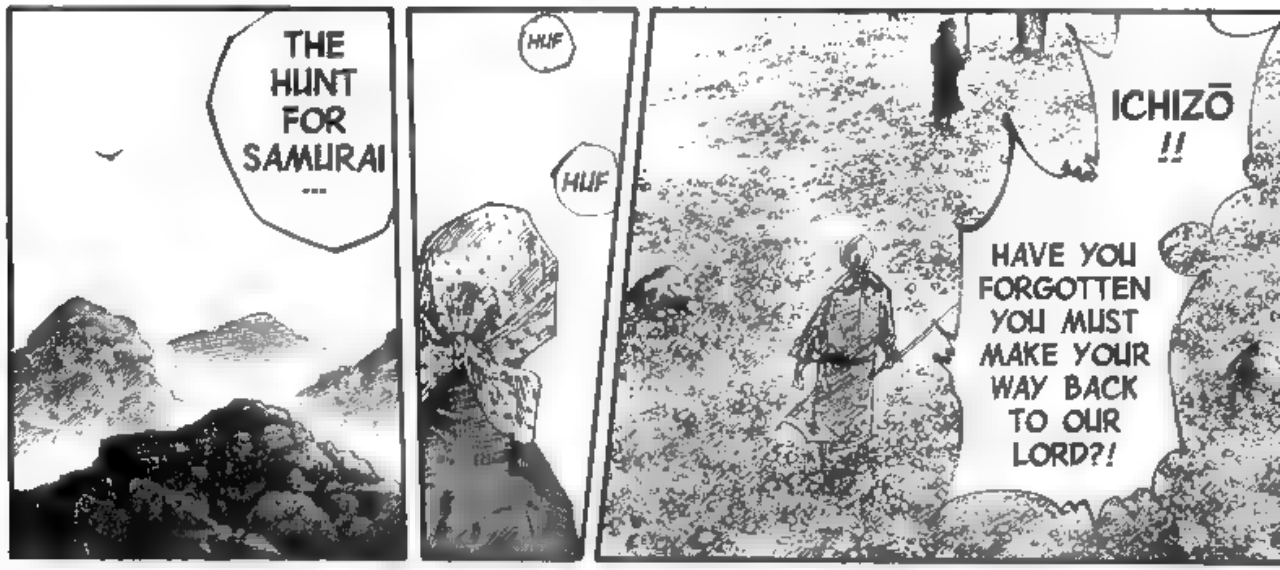
ARGH!
FWOOSH
ICHIZŌ!
!!

FWIP
...
!
LINGH
WHUDD
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

FICH
HUF
HUF
KOUN, I'M GOING TO CUT HIM DOWN.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
ICHIZO !!
WAIT, ICHIZO !!
IT'S NOT FAIR. KOUN AND SADAKORE ...
?!
BOTH OF YOU ARE SO SELFISH ...
HUF
HUF

...I GOT EXCITED TOO.
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM...
HUF
I WANTED TO FIGHT HIM...
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF

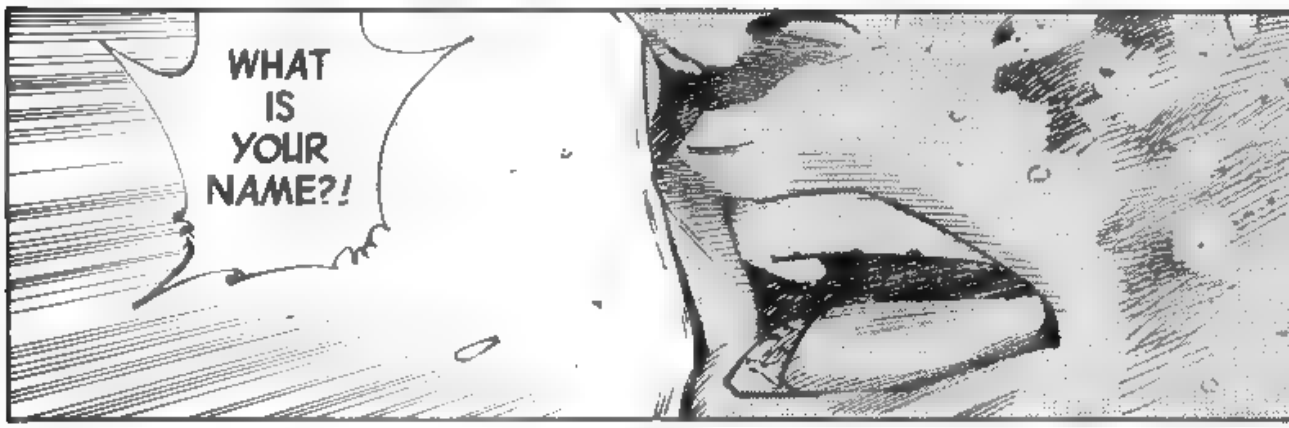

THE HUNT FOR SAMURAI ...
HUF
HUF
ICHIZŌ !!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOU MUST MAKE YOUR WAY BACK TO OUR LORD?!

I BELIEVE OUR LORD HAS PERISHED.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN EVEN WORSE FOR OUR LORD THAN IT WAS FOR US...
...HE'S A PRIZE CATCH FOR OUR ENEMIES.

SADAKORE INSISTED I SURVIVE NO MATTER WHAT...
BUT, KOUN...
!!
HUF
HUF
I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CARRY MY BROTHER.
I AM MAGAKI ICHIZŌ!!
AND YOU...?!
ICHIZŌ!

.....
TELL ME WHO YOU ARE!!

YOUR NAME...


WHAT IS YOUR NAME?!

TUGG
...!!
HE CAN'T HEAR ...!!
THIS MAN CAN'T...
FWIP

AHH...

...KOJIRŌ.
SASAKI...
SASAKI KOJIRŌ.

.....

HERE I COME, KOJIRŌ.

Vagabond

(GRR GRRR GRRR!)

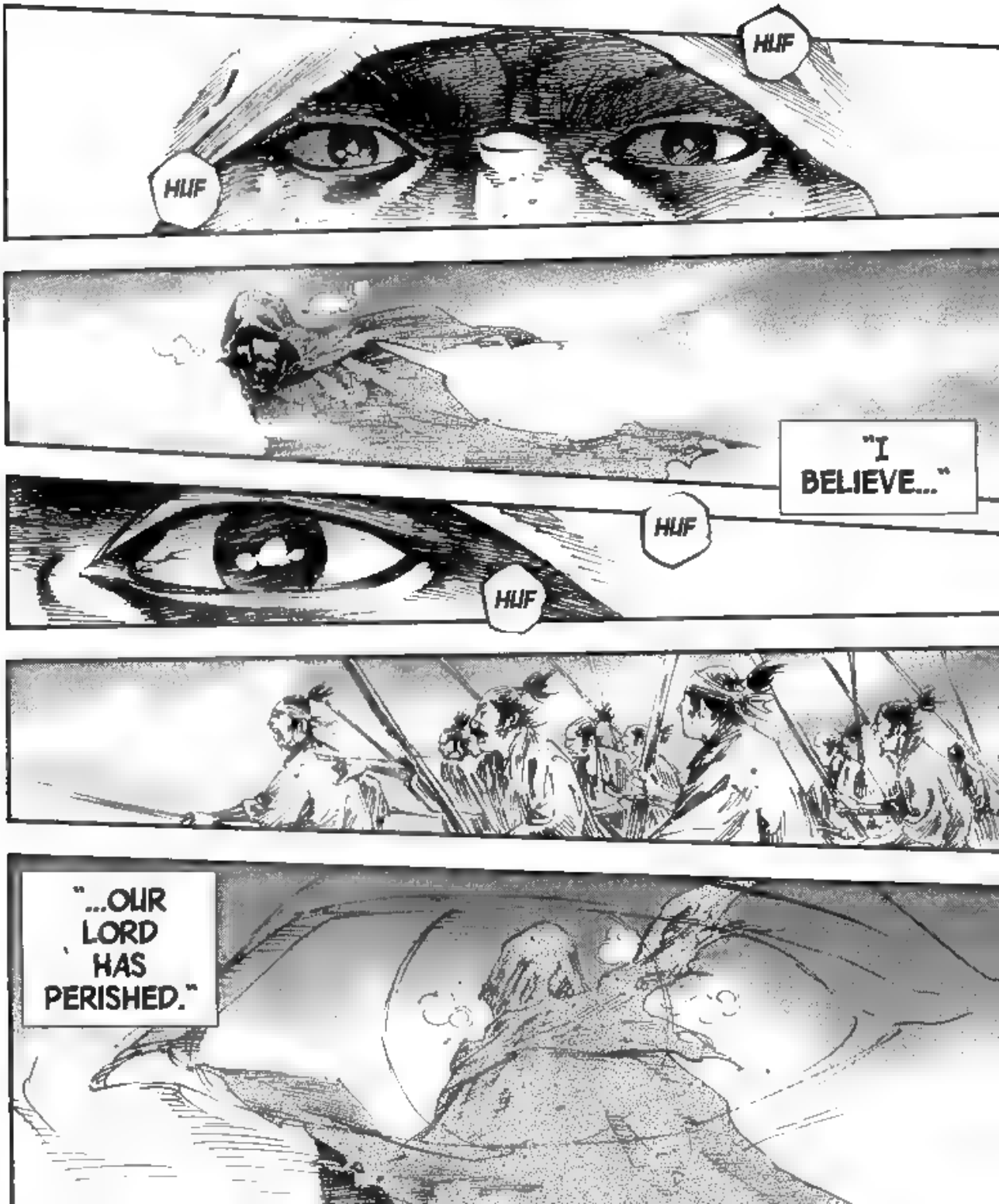
SASAKI KOJIRŌ.
HERE I COME, KOJIRŌ.
ICHI ...

#174 | Ichizō

KOUN...
PLEASE DON'T INTERVENE.
ICHIZŌ...!!

HAH! YOU YOURSELF JUST SAID...
HUF
HUF
THIS MAN KILLED SADAKORE.
HOW COULD YOU LOOK SO PLEASED?
HUF
"I PRAY YOU'RE THE STRONGEST MAN I'VE YET TO ENCOUNTER!"
.....
YOUR EYES ARE GLEAMING ...!!
HUF
HUF

"I BELIEVE OUR LORD HAS PERISHED..."



KAWW
KAWW
KAWW
KAWW
SADAKORE...
WERE YOU SEEKING A PLACE TO DIE?
KAWW
KAWW

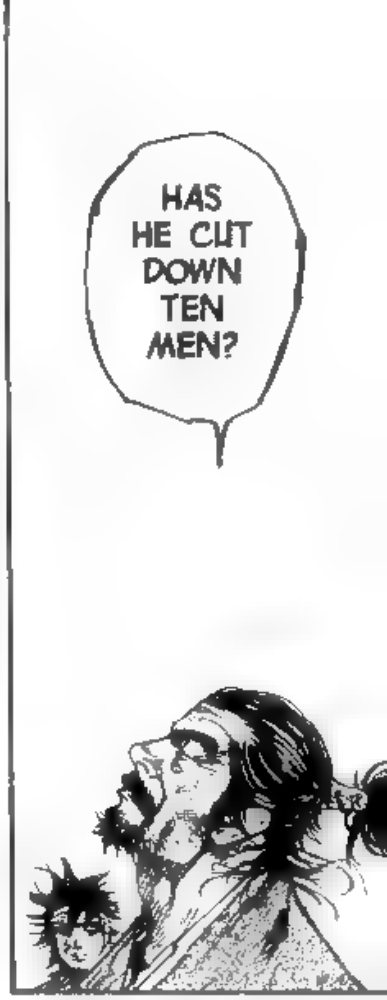
A WAY
TO DIE
THE NOBLE
DEATH
OF A
SWORDSMAN.

PHEW...
WE SHOULD BE SAFE HERE.
SIPP
WE MANAGED TO SURVIVE ...!
KOJIRŌ...
.....
GON...
THOK
YOU GO ON HOME.
URGH...
MASTER ITTŌSAI, I MUST TELL YOU.
THIS ORDEAL WAS TOO EXTREME !!
KOJIRŌ MIGHT BE DEAD--

UNFORTU-
NATELY,
I'M SO
INARTIC-
ULATE.
FICH
I
WANT
TO BE
YOUR
DISCIPLE
!!
SENSEI
!!
YOU
CAN'T
DO
THIS!
I'VE
COME
THIS FAR
WITH
YOU...
WHAT
IS THAT,
SIR?
EVEN IF YOU
ACCOMPANIED
ME, THERE'S
ONLY ONE THING
I COULD
TELL YOU.
IF YOU
CAN'T DO
THAT, THEN
GO HOME.
BECOME
ME.
KOJIRŌ...
I
HOPE
YOU
SURVIVED.
"BECOME
ME..."
...!!

THEY'RE IN FACT MORE THREATENING INSOFAR AS YOU CAN'T ANTICIPATE THEIR MOVEMENTS.
THRONGS OF MEN WHO'VE NEVER EVEN WIELDED A SWORD.
CHASED BY SPEARS...
AND BY SWORDS AND ARROWS...
IT MAY BE MORE FRUITFUL THAN SEVERAL YEARS OF ROUTINE TRAINING.
...AGAINST THIS BLOOD-THIRSTY SWARM...
THESE LAST FEW DAYS OF FIGHTING ON YOUR OWN...
...!!
SMIRK
MOST MEN WOULD EITHER GET KILLED IMMEDIATELY OR GO INSANE.
...WOULD HAVE TO BE EXCEPTIONAL ...
YOUR NERVES, STRENGTH, AND SWORDS-MANSHIP...

OR FIFTY...?
BY THE TIME HE'S KILLED A HUNDRED...


HAS HE CUT DOWN TEN MEN?

HE'LL HAVE ACQUIRED THE INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL.

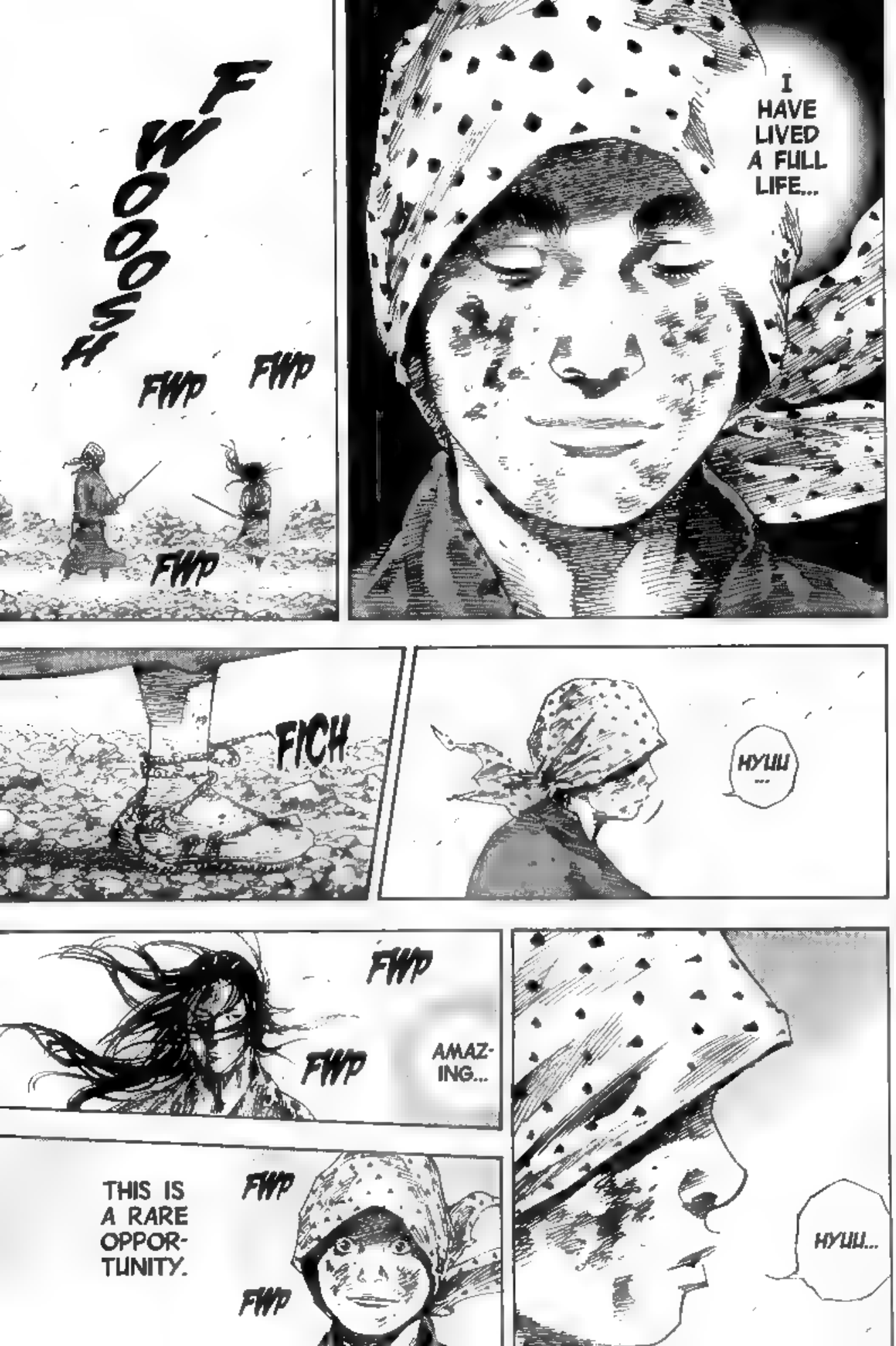
...THE STRONGEST AND FASTEST SWORDSMAN-SHIP.
THAT'S HOW I'VE SURVIVED.
THE BODY LEARNS AND ACQUIRES IT...

IF WE MEET AGAIN...
...HE WILL NO LONGER BE MY JUNIOR NOR MY DISCIPLE...
IF HE MANAGES TO SURVIVE, HE WILL HAVE TURNED INTO AN UNBELIEVABLE FIGHTER.
HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY ...
HE ISN'T IN THE SAME LEAGUE THOUGH...
HE WILL APPEAR BEFORE ME AS MY OPPONENT.
HEH HEH HEH...
?

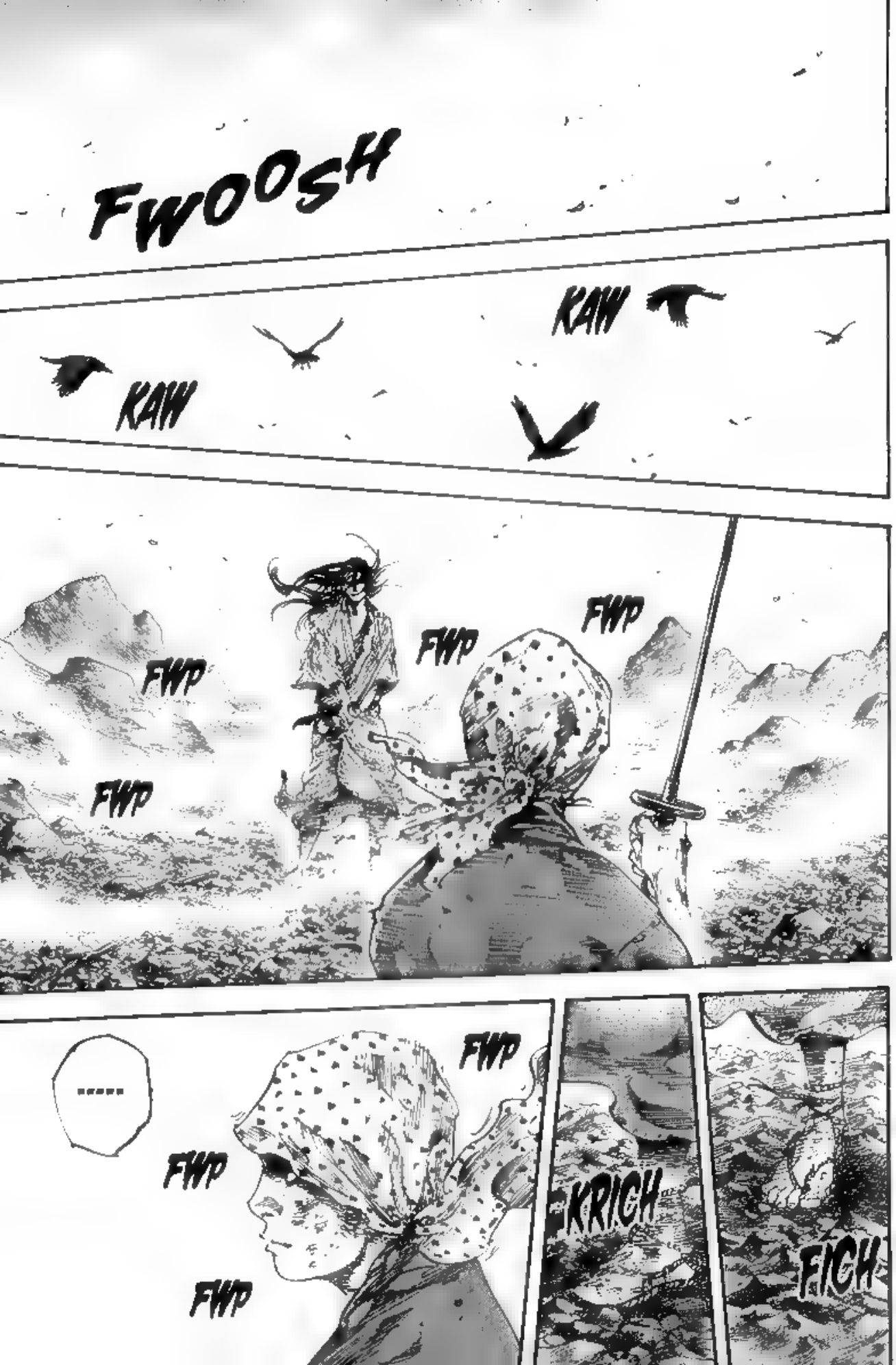
HUH ?
GON, IT'S QUITE BORING TO HAVE NO RIVALS THAT ARE YOUR EQUALS.
I WOULD WELCOME THAT MAN AS A DEAR FRIEND...
A FORMIDABLE ENEMY WHO CAN POSE A THREAT TO MY LIFE...

FWOOOSH
FWP
FWP
FWP

FWP
FWP
HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S ABOUT MY AGE.
FWP
FWP
FWP
...FOR ONE OF US.
FWP
FWP
IT WILL HAVE BEEN A SHORT LIFE...


FWOOOSH
FWP
FWP
FWP
I HAVE LIVED A FULL LIFE...
FICH
HYUU...
FWP
FWP
AMAZ-ING...
THIS IS A RARE OPPOR-TUNITY.
FWP
FWP
HYUU...

I'M NOT AFRAID OF DYING.


FWOOSH
KAW
KAW
FWP
FWP
FWP
FWP
FWP
FWP
FWP
.....
KRICH
FICH

I CAN'T HEAR A THING.

THE SENSE THAT I MUST WIN.
I'VE EXPERIENCED THIS SENSATION A NUMBER OF TIMES.
HE TOWERS ABOVE ME LIKE KOUN.
HE'S BIG.

BUT...
...IT'S NOT EVEN POWER THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE FOR SWORDFIGHTING...
...IT'S NOT SIZE THAT MATTERS...
EVEN THE WILL TO KILL IS DISTRACTING.
I'M STILL THINKING WITH WORDS.
AH, NO...

HOW FRUSTRATING.

I MUST DISPEL MY THOUGHTS.

A BIRD DOESN'T *THINK* OF FLYING. IT SIMPLY FLIES... ..

STOP THESE WORD GAMES....

OR YOU'LL LOSE THIS PRECIOUS SILENCE ...

THAT'S RIGHT.
HE'S SMILING.
YOU'VE LIVED IN THIS KIND OF WORLD YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.

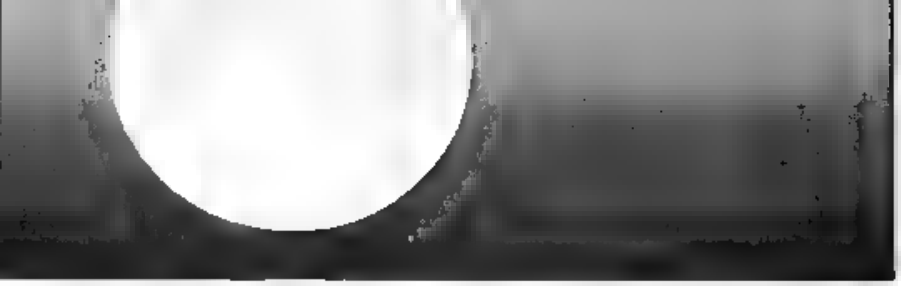
KAWH
SLISH
!!

#175 Younger Brother

I HOLD
MY
BROTHER'S
HAND...

YET HE STILL WANDERS OFF ON HIS OWN.
HE DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE HOW I LOOK AFTER HIM.
WHAT?! ICHIZŌ'S MISSING ?!

WAK
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AFTER HIM, SHINJIRŌ! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
!!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SHINJIRŌ LOST ICHIZŌ IN THE MOUNTAINS ...!!
WHAT?! HE'S STILL LOST?!
WE CAN'T JUST STAND AROUND HERE!!
HURRY! THE SUN IS GOING TO SET SOON!
BEING HIS BIG BROTHER IS SUCH A BURDEN.
IT'S NOT FAIR.
...BUT HE JUST WALKS AWAY...
I KEPT TELLING HIM NOT TO WANDER OFF...

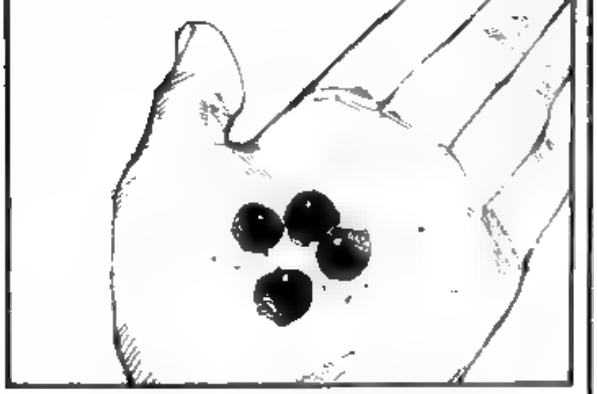


WHO CARES ABOUT BEING BROTHERS!..

LOOKS LIKE THEY HAVEN'T FOUND ICHIZŌ YET, SHINJIRŌ.

.....

I'M SURE YOUR PRAYER WILL BE ANSWERED ...



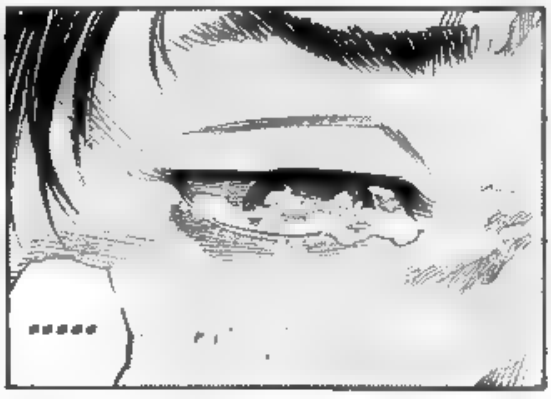
KRNCH

GRRR

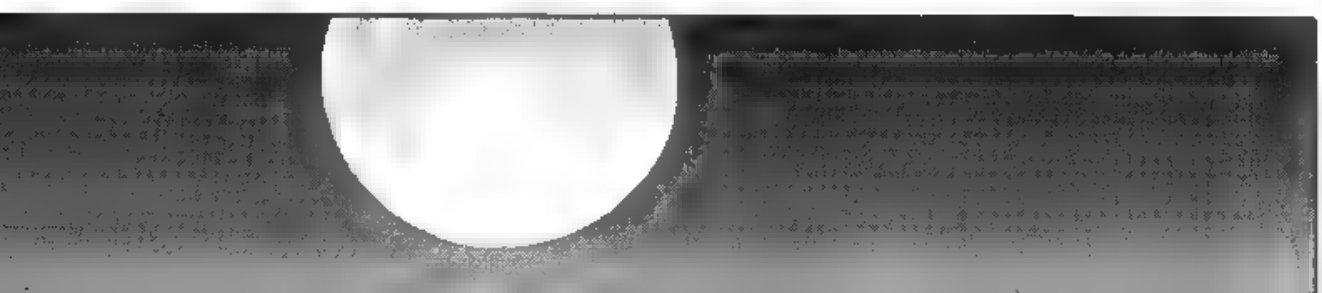
MNCH
MNCH
.....
MNCH
MNCH

SHINJIRŌ...

PLEASE
...


.....

PLEASE LET US FIND ICHIZŌ...



WHAT ?!
ICHIZO, YOU LITTLE RASCAL!!
HE'S BACK!!
HEY...
LOOK AT THAT...
ICHI--
HE HAS NO IDEA...
NO CLUE ...
FIP
FIP
HA HA HA!! YOU GOT SOME NERVE, ICHIZŌ!!
HE'S ACTING AS IF NOTHING'S WRONG.
LOOKS LIKE WE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

.....
WHAT MATTERS MOST IS THAT HE'S SAFE.
MURMUR MURMUR
WHAT? YOU FELL ASLEEP UNDER THE BRIDGE?
UNTIL MORNING ?!
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM NOW.
HOW I PRAYED FOR HIM ALL NIGHT.
SHINJIRŌ ...
HEY...
THANK GOODNESS!
REALLY ...
SHINJIRŌ ...

HM?
WHAT'S WRONG NOW, ICHIZŌ?
WAAH
SHINJIRŌ...

I'M GLAD...
SHINJIRŌ!
I'M GLAD YOU'RE SAFE, ICHIZŌ !!

GRB
ICHIZŌ!!
FICH
FICH
FICH
FICH

YOU FOUGHT HONOR-ABLY.

ICHIZŌ.
I WATCHED YOU TO THE VERY END.
FICH

FICH

IT HAPPENED SO FAST I COULDN'T SEE IT.

AT LEAST HIS SWORD WAS QUICK TO THE KILL.

HIS SWORD SLASHED MY BROTHER'S NECK...

AH...
...
URR

SASAKI KOJIRŌ!!
GRB
ARRRGH!

HUF
MY DAMN LEG.
HUF
HUF
HUF
KLAK
FWISH
HUF
HUF
WIGG
WIGG
WAK
THOK
THIS DAMN LEG.
WAK

THWAK
THWAK
THWAK
THIS DAMN LEG!
HUF
HUF
HUF
ICHIZŌ!!
NNGH...
UR...
URR...

FWOOSH
FICH

VWOOSH
FICH
FWIP

FICH

FWOOSH
IS THAT SOME KIND OF DANCE ...?
NO...
NO, THAT'S NOT IT...
HE'S PRACTICING SOME SORT OF TECHNIQUE.

FWOOSH
SASAKI KOJIRŌ, IN THE COURSE OF YOUR PREVIOUS FIGHT...
...DID YOU JUST DISCOVER A NEW TECHNIQUE?

AHH...

RIGHT
...

THAT OFTEN HAPPENS IN A FIGHT.

FWOOSH

AHH!!
YES!! I'M EXCITED TOO!!

Vagabond

ICHIZO

TOK
ICHIZO
FWOOSH
TUP
TOK
AHH!!
TOK

#176 | Open Mind

?
I AM IGAYA KOUN!!
IGA...
...YA ...
...KOUN!

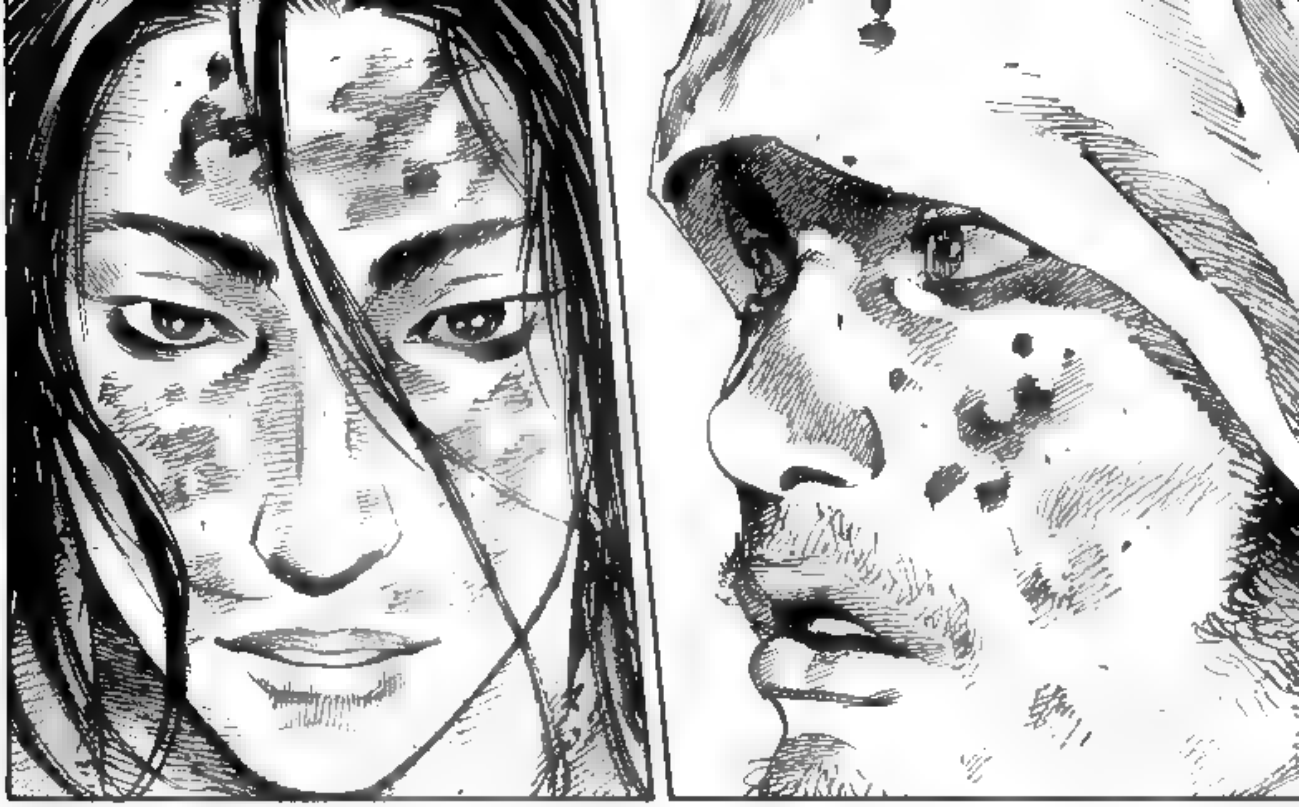
THAT'S...
...MY NAME!!
FWP
FWP
FWP
FWISH

SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
.....
FWP
FWP
FWOOO

"I BELIEVE OUR LORD HAS PERISHED."

KAWW
KAWW
KAWW

FICH



FICH

FICH
TMP

FWCH
HUF
HUF
HUF

FWOOSH
ONE MORE STEP IN AND HE WOULD HAVE CUT ME DOWN.
HUF
HUF
FWOOSH
I DON'T AGREE WITH YOU, ICHIZŌ.
OUR LORD HAS *NOT* PERISHED.
FWOOSH

SNIPP
I'M GOING TO SURVIVE.
I'M GOING TO LIVE.

FWOOSH
AHH!
FWOH
AHH...
FWOH
HUU
HUU

FWOMM
TMP

FICH
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
AHH!!

WIP
WIP
WHAT ?!
I WAS ONLY ABLE TO GRAZE YOUR LEG?
HUF
HUF
IMPRESSIVE !!

TMP

!
AHH...
AYAHH ...
AHH...

AHHH
AYAHHH...
AHHH
UAHH...

I COULDN'T EVEN REACT.
I SHOULD'VE BEEN KILLED.
HOW DID HE MANAGE TO GET IN SO CLOSE TO ME?!
WHY DIDN'T YOU CUT ME, KOJIRŌ?!
HE MANAGED TO LEAP IN CLOSE BECAUSE HE HAD NO DESIRE TO CUT ME.
AHHH
NO, IF HE HAD ANY INTENTION TO KILL ME, THEN I WOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO REACT.
ECSTATIC, ARE YOU?
AHHH

Vagabond

(AUHH!)
(FWSHH)

#177 | Koun and Kojirō

AHH--
EH, KOJIRO?!
SO YOU'RE ECSTATIC...

FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND!!
CUT HIM DOWN, KOUN!!
AHH!
FWOOSH

A TRUE SWORDSMAN WOULD HAVE MORE RESPECT.
HE KILLED SADAKORE AND ICHIZŌ...
AND NOW HE'S JUMPING AROUND LAUGHING LIKE A LUNATIC!!
HE KILLED ALL THOSE PEASANTS SPRAWLED ABOUT TOO.
HOW COULD HE BE LAUGHING AFTER KILLING SO MANY MEN?!
HE'S INSANE!!
AHH!

HOW COULD YOU HAVE SUCH A PURE-LOOKING SMILE ON YOUR FACE...?
PLISH
FWOOSH

AHHH!!

WHY ARE YOU SO HAPPY ...?!
WHY...?
FICH
FICH
FICH

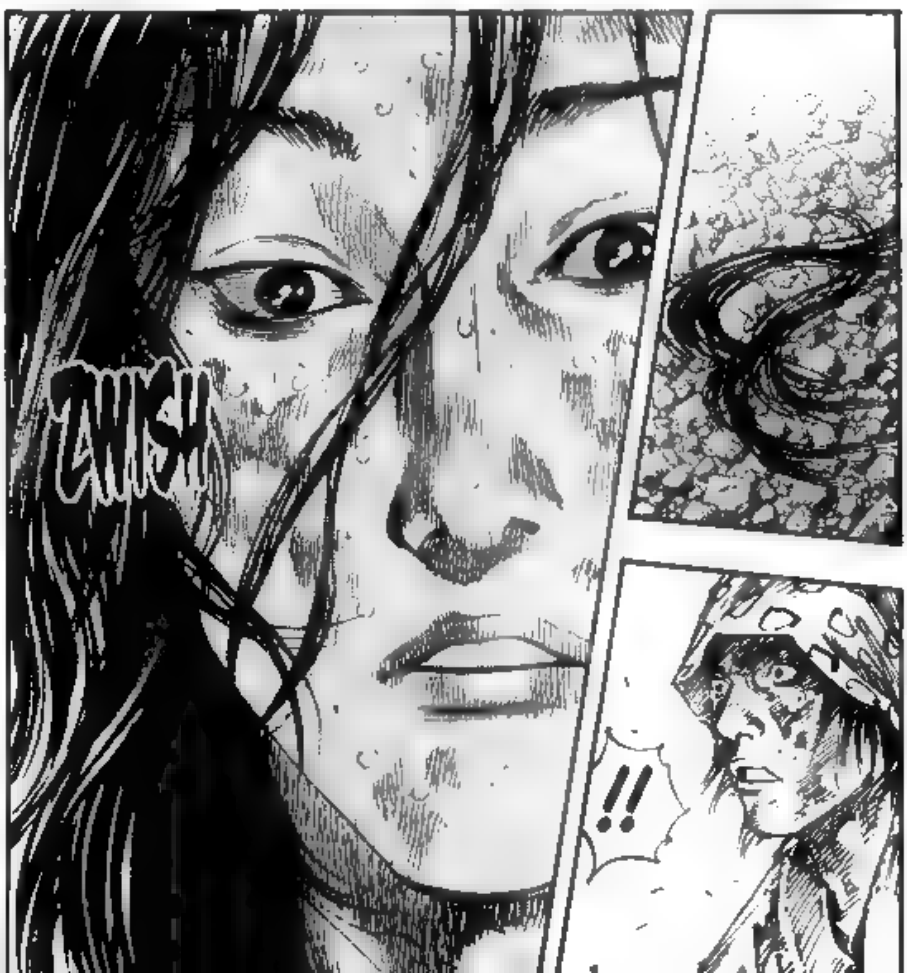
FWOOSH

UMF!
WOOOSH

FWOOSH
FICH

SNIPP

SO I WAS RIGHT. LAST TIME...
HUF
...I COULDN'T REACT BECAUSE YOU HAD NO INTENTION OF CUTTING ME.
HUF
BUT I *CAN* REACT WHEN YOU DO MEAN TO CUT ME.

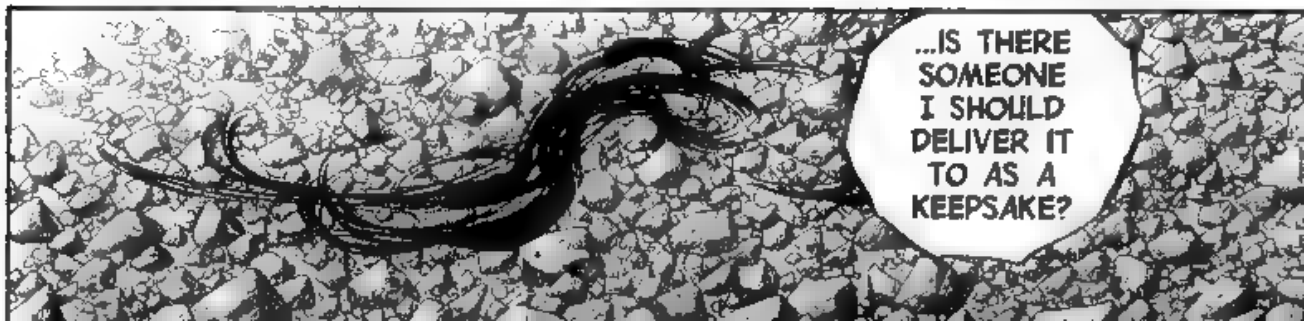

ZWISH
!!

SASAKI KOJIRŌ!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
FWOOSH

KOLIN...

HUF
HUF

THAT LOCK OF HAIR...
HUF
HUF


...IS THERE SOMEONE I SHOULD DELIVER IT TO AS A KEEPSAKE?

KOUN...

HUF
HUF

HM?

KOUN
!!

SO...
HUF
...YOU REALLY CANNOT HEAR.
HUF

HUH?!
GLEAM
HUF
HUF
HUF
YOU BASTARD !!
HUF
LIRR ...
NGHH ...
SO... YOU GOT ME.

FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
HUF
I'M FINE!
HUF
FICH

WOOSH

FWOOSH

KLANG
KOLIN!
WHUD

FWUP
WE COULD HAVE IGNORED HIM...
...WHEN WE ENCOUNTERED HIM.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

BUT LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENED INSTEAD...
BUT LOOK...
HUF
HUF
HUF
SLASH HIM, KOUN!
HUF
CUT HIM DOWN...
HUF

FWOOSH
THEN WE CAN HURRY AND MAKE IT BEYOND THIS MOUNTAIN.

!?
FWOOSH

Vagabond

#178 Koun and Kojirō Part III

KOLIN
!!

.....
HUF
HUF
HUF
UMF!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I SEE...
HUF
HUF
FWOOSH
HUF
HUF
HUF
WOOSH
THAT'S IT!!
HUF
HUF
HUF

ANOTHER DISCOVERY !!
HUF
HUF
I'M...
HUF
I'M EVEN FASTER NOW!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

KWOOSH
AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO FIGHTING AGAINST YOU!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
PLIP PLIP PLIP
PLIP PLIP

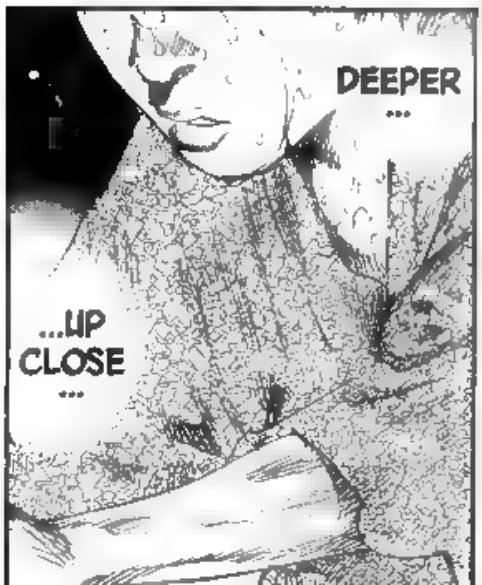
FWISH

AHHH!
HUF
HUF
SO YOU'VE MADE A DISCOVERY IN TECHNIQUE TOO!!
HUF
HUF
HUF

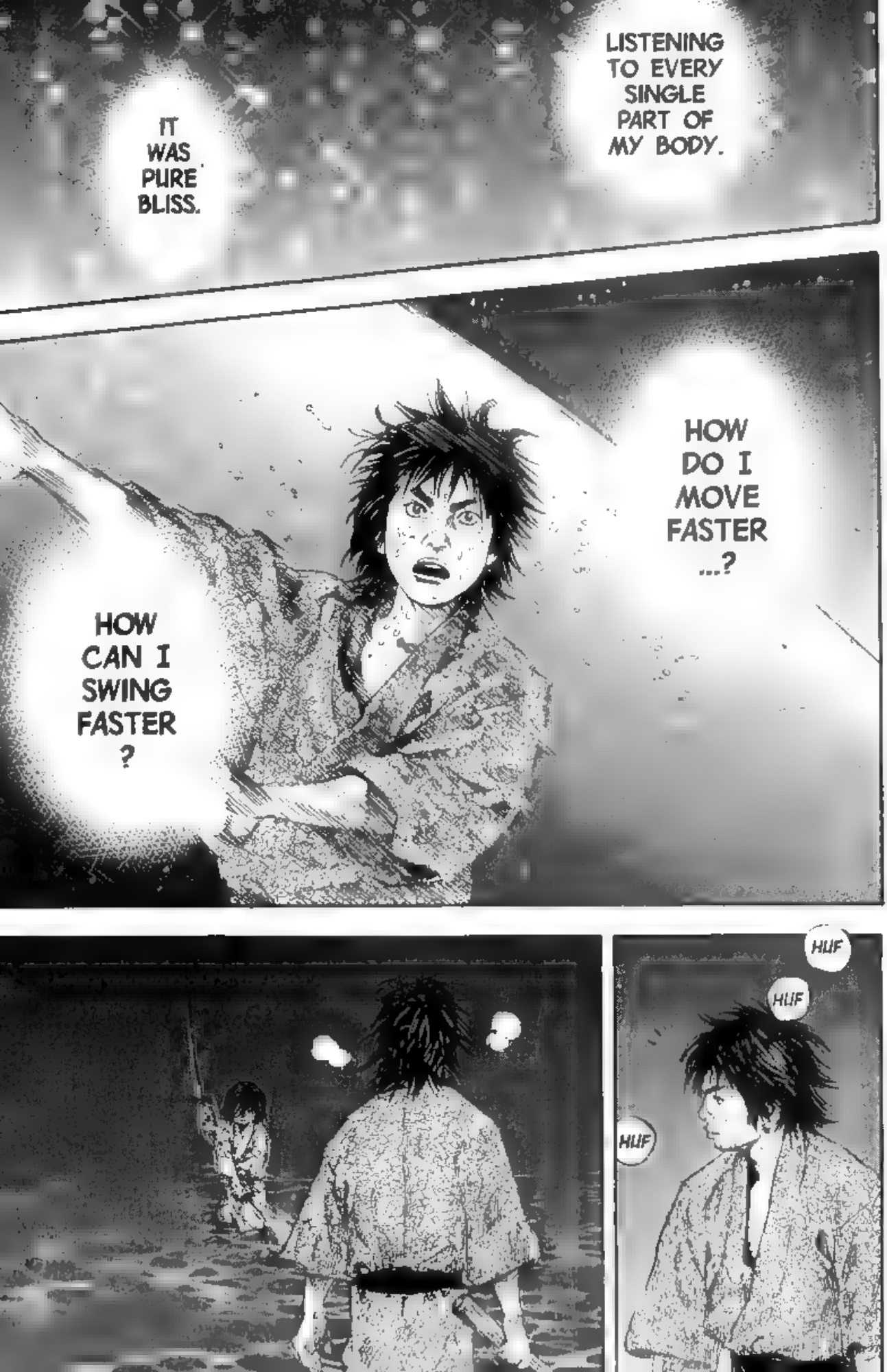
AHH YAHH!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
PLIP PLIP
...THAT'S HOW YOU ACQUIRE NEW TECH-NIQUES.
HUF
THE BODY ALWAYS KNOWS...
HUF
HUF
HUF

EVER SINCE SADAKORE TAUGHT ME THIS A LONG TIME AGO...
I'VE LISTENED TO MY BODY'S VOICE.

CALMLY...
...CAREFULLY...


DEEPER ...
...UP CLOSE ...

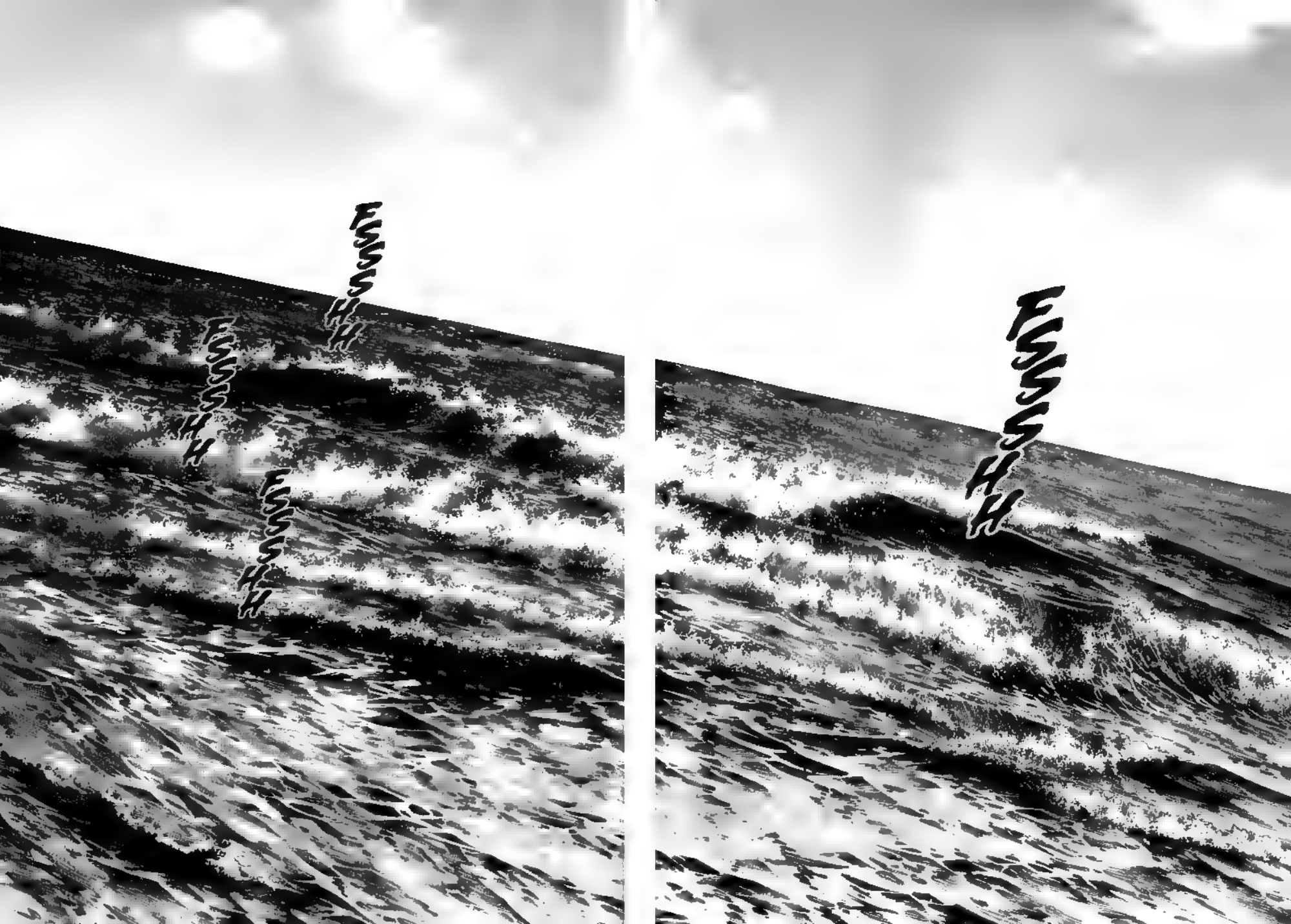
...I'VE LISTENED DEEP WITHIN MY BODY.
CONCEN-TRATING ...


IT WAS PURE BLISS.
LISTENING TO EVERY SINGLE PART OF MY BODY.
HOW CAN I SWING FASTER ?
HOW DO I MOVE FASTER ...?
HUF
HUF
HUF

AHH!
UHHH!
AUHH!
UHH!
AUHH!

HUF
HUF
YOU'VE MASTERED SO MUCH AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE!!
I SEE NOW.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
YOU WERE BORN DEAF...
THUMP
THUMP
HUF
HUF

THAT'S WHY YOU HAD PLENTY OF TIME...
...TO LISTEN TO YOUR OWN BODY!!


FSSSHH
FSSSHH
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

HUF
...YOU MUST HAVE DEVOTED SO MUCH TIME...
INSIDE YOUR OWN WORLD WITHOUT ANY INTERVENTION...
STRIVING FOR A STRONGER AND FASTER SWORD...
HUF
THAT'S HOW YOU FOUND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF THE SWORD.
...EVERY PART OF YOUR OWN BODY...
YOU CAME TO KNOW...
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
I'VE NEVER MET A PERSON LIKE YOU...
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
A PERSON PURELY DEVOTED TO THE SWORD!!

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
AND SO TODAY...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...YOU'VE DISCOVERED YET ANOTHER TECHNIQUE.
KOJIRŌ !!
HUF

#179 | Koun and Kojirō Part III

SASAKI KOJIRŌ...
AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU MET ME?

HUF
OUR ENCOUNTER ...
...HAS GIVEN YOU THE CHANCE TO UNLEASH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT.
HUF
HUF
HUF
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
HUF
AHHH!
HUF
HUF

SMIRK
HUF
I FEEL THE SAME WAY!
HUF
MY SWORD RIGHT NOW...
...IS GIVING EVERY-THING I HAVE...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
NO, EVEN MORE.

HUF
HUF
HUF
I COULDN'T STOP TREMBLING AT THE SIGHT OF A MOUNTAIN IN FLAMES.
WHEN I WAS A CHILD...
FUMP
I FELT THE SAME WAY AT WAR...
...WATCHING KOUN FROM BEHIND.
HUF
HUF
TUGG
HUF

KOLIN LOOKS AS IF HE'S ON FIRE.
HE'S ON FIRE...

FICH
FICH
I CUT TEN, THEN TWENTY MEN DOWN...
IS THIS IT?
THE MORE I KILLED THE MORE I LOST SIGHT OF WHAT I WAS DOING.
BY THE TIME I KILLED OVER FORTY I STOPPED COUNTING.

THAT'S THE KIND OF MAN I WANTED TO BE.
FICH
FWOOSH
CUTTING DOWN AN ARMY OF A THOUSAND ...

KLANG

IS THIS WHAT I WANTED?

I'M SO THIRSTY.
HAKK
HLIF
HLIF
ANY WATER LEFT?
HLIF
FICH
!!
FWIP
HLIF
HAK
TMP
TMP
TMP
GASP!

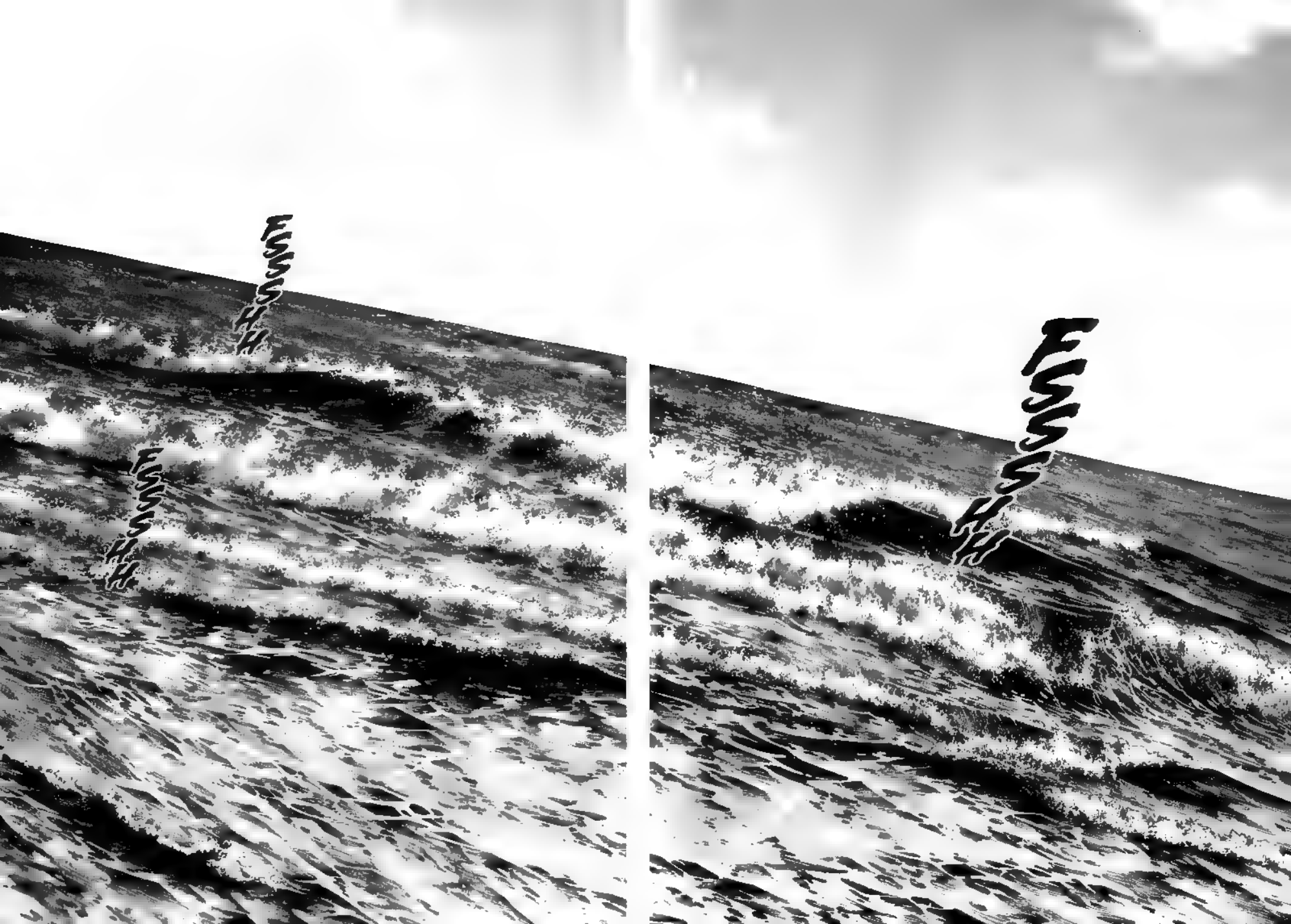
I'M SCARED.
NO...
WHAT AN AMAZING SIGHT...
IT'S SHAPELESS...
AND YET HUGE...

FICH
I MUST PERSEVERE !!
THIS IS IT.
MUST KEEP MOVING FORWARD...
FORWARD...

IF I CAN BREAK THROUGH...
YAHHH!

KOJIRŌ...

WE EMBRACE EACH OTHER THROUGH OUR SWORDS.


FSSSHH
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

KOJIRŌ, I WONDER HOW YOU ARE DOING?
FSSSHH
FSSSHH
FSSSHH

HAVE YOU MADE ANY FRIENDS?
FSSSHH

HAH
YAHH
YAHH
HA
HA

FSSSHH
FSSSHH
KOLIN
...

AHHH...

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga SLAM DUNK, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on VAGABOND. In 2002, VAGABOND received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. Most recently, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. To date VAGABOND has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, ONE ON ONE.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's VAGABOND, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel MUSASHI, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of sumi-e (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise THE SAMURAI TRILOGY directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's MUSASHI. Inspired by the huge success of VAGABOND in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama MUSASHI. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of VAGABOND, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Echizen
Located in the northern part of present-day Fukui Prefecture.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Muso Gonnosuke (dates unknown)
Founder of the Shinto Muso-ryu school of martial arts, which mainly utilized the wooden staff. Gonnosuke is said to have been one of the many to lose to Musashi in a duel. According to some accounts he defeated Musashi in a rematch.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi. Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or Sengoku period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous daimyo (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the daimyo were constantly at war with each other. One daimyo in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the daimyo, and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the daimyo from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major daimyo from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled THE UNFETTERED MIND has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, takuan, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the ometsuke—responsible for the surveillance of the daimyo. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's LONE WOLF AND CUB as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the Sengoku period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's VAGABOND, as well as in Yoshikawa's MUSASHI, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

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editor's choice

Vagabond

Nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award in the category for Best Writer/Artist!

"...reads like an Akira Kurosawa film captured on the printed page."
—Cliff Biggers, *Comic Buyer's Guide*

Sasaki Kojiro, renowned for his deadly "swallow-cut," is the man destined to be sword-saint Miyamoto Musashi's greatest rival and opponent in the most well-known duel in the annals of Japanese history. In the aftermath of the Battle of Sekigahara, Kojiro comes face to face with emotions previously unknown to him—fear and desperation. Far from being daunted, Kojiro embraces these feelings and allows them to shape him into what may be the ultimate swordsman.

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